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A New Departure in the Treatment of Inmates of Penal Institutions

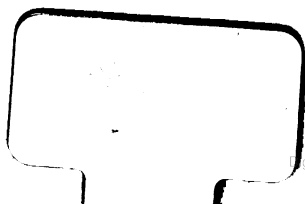
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PUBLICATIONS OF THE
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CHICAGO
HOUSE OF CORRECTION

A New Departure
IN THE TREATMENT
OF INMATES
OF PENAL
INSTITUTIONS



By **SAMUEL C. KOHS**, Director
PSYCHOPATHIC DEPARTMENT

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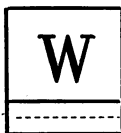
**RESEARCH DEPARTMENT
OF THE
CHICAGO HOUSE OF CORRECTION**

**DEVOTED
TO THE STUDY AND TREATMENT
OF ASOCIAL TYPES**

JOHN L. WHITMAN, Superintendent
CHARLES E. SCELETH, Director Medical Department
SAMUEL C. KOHS, Director Psychopathic Department

**CHICAGO
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1915**

A NEW DEPARTURE IN THE TREATMENT OF INMATES OF PENAL INSTITUTIONS



WITH the growth of information regarding the particular mental and physical characteristics of our social offenders, together with the birth of a new, more humane attitude toward those who may happen to break the law, has come an entirely new method in the treatment of this type of individual. The following ideas are the beacon lights by which this new departure has been able to guide its development : (a) none of us are completely responsible for the errors into which we fall. There are definite factors, such as heredity, education, environment, certain peculiar sequences of events, certain undue pressures which force us despite our will to commit an act contrary to our habitual mode of response. (b) No human being is fundamentally vicious and anti-social. These tendencies are rather a product of our peculiarly complex, and by some thought to be, unnaturally warped social organization which is built upon a foundation whose keystone is the serious fallacy that all men are created free and equal. (c) Our social organism has been so constructed as to make no provision for the peculiar deficiencies of the feeble-minded. With the growth in complexity of our industrial and community life, with the growth of a broader, more paternal attitude, not a narrow, ignorant, revengeful one, a relic of the past, we are beginning to recognize that the mentally-deficient are really children who have developed physically, their mental life having remained on the juvenile level. And we are beginning to make allowances for this deficiency attempting various social readjustments, educational, institutional and vocational to accommodate and bring less pain to these unfortunates. (d) In the very worst of us, if we should only for a moment be permitted the folly of assuming the existence of such a type there are always present many hidden, untouched and unfathomed tendencies for good. What these are, and how we may utilize them

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to the best advantage are problems still waiting to be practically solved.

What are we doing at the Chicago House of Correction to put into practice those ideas which are now accepted as the only rational ones in our treatment of the offender? We will first indicate what is being accomplished at the present time, then will be outlined our program for the future. All of those between the ages of 17 and 21 who are sentenced to the House of Correction are subject to call for psychological diagnosis. Of these there are a number who are recommended to the Psychopathic Department by the Boys' Court. To this group special attention is paid. Whenever the above list is exhausted, older inmates, particularly recidivists are interviewed.

An inmate is seldom called to the laboratory unless he has been in the Institution at least five days or more. With the new orientation, with the adaptation to the changed environment comes a settled feeling; one of relief from the perplexity and the uncertainty of the court decision, one in which there is no fear of making a false step. A special effort is made by our trusty who accompanies the prisoner, to make clear the purpose of our interviews: that our main aim is to help him to the best of our ability, to be of assistance to him not only while he is within these four walls, but also when he leaves here. Our purpose is to see that he is properly adjusted at work for which he is best fitted. Should he be without a trade, it is our business to determine his particular aptitudes and to place him in an industry where he can learn as much of the trade as possible, so that when he leaves he will be better prepared vocationally to earn his living. He is also told, that should his case be found deserving, a recommendation for his release on parole would be made. He is given to understand that nothing which we obtain will ever be used in any manner to his disadvantage. Our whole care is for his ultimate welfare.

As a result, the inmate comes to the laboratory in a more

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co-operative spirit. He knows he has nothing to lose and everything to gain. We have consequently had no difficulty at all; in fact, men have come entirely of their own volition to see what we could do for them after having realized that they were somewhere out of gear. Many have anxiously come to see what we could do to help them keep out of further difficulty.

Once in the laboratory the inmate is made to feel as much at home as possible. An inmate only a few days ago expressed himself very descriptively at the conclusion of one of our interviews: "Say Doc, going through here is like going through a penny arcade."

The interview is begun with questions regarding his school and trade training, his industrial history, the positions he has held, the amount of salary received, the length of service in each and why he left; the reasons for the periods of unemployment; the work he is best able to perform, and the kind he likes best; his ambition; his prospects of employment when released. We then obtain a full and detailed account of the criminal career of the individual from the day he first found himself in difficulty. Any past sicknesses, accidents and diseases are noted. Inquiry is made of any past examinations, mental, physical or both. The subject is then questioned regarding his father, mother, siblings and other relatives, the same information being elicited regarding them as was obtained from him personally. We often uncover a neuropathic family, of which this member is but one out of a number of others who are not only potentially a danger and menace to the community but have already made society pay dearly for their having been at large. It is slightly discouraging to be utterly helpless to avoid any repetition of such social folly, to be certain that the circle of release, commission of crime and temporary reincarceration will be oft and many times repeated. Other questions, besides these mentioned are sometimes asked, varying with each case. It is but natural to expect that this history will only

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approach accuracy, but will never attain it. The services of a field worker are necessary to verify and supplement the data.

With this personal-industrial-sociological-family history, more or less complete, we pass on to our mental tests. Our main instrument here, is of course, the Binet Scale as adapted by Dr. Goddard at the Vineland Training School. We also use the following: Healy's Construction Puzzle, (a); Kempf's Diagonal; Knox's Cube Test; Goddard's Form Board; Fernald's Ethical Discrimination Test; The "A" Test; Norsworthy's Memory Test; Kent-Rosanoff Association Series; one of Woodworth & Wells' Following Directions Test; the Courtis Tests (Series A); McCallie's Vision Test; a test for audition (watch); a test with the dynamometer for obtaining the fatigue index described in Whipple's Manual, supplemented by our formula for an index of the subject's ability to perform purely physical labor; the tests for height, standing and sitting, weight, strength of grip and vital capacity, besides some of our own tests of ethical development. These are gradually being supplemented, and in the near future we plan to add tests of ability to learn in relation to forgetting and to re-adaptation, among others. The results of, and the correlations between these tests are being worked out and we plan later to publish our findings.

In applying the tests the following order is always observed: Vision, Audition, Binet (Norsworthy's Memory included before the sentence XII 3), Association, Healy, Diagonal, Knox, Ethical Tests, Following Directions, "A", Courtis, Form Board, Anthropometry, Fatigue Index.

On the basis of the information obtained a report on each individual case is made and the record placed in the hands of the Superintendent who acts upon the recommendations. As a result of the examination, any of these three courses may be followed, depending upon general conditions: (a) the inmate may be placed in a special class for mental defectives; or, (b) he may be placed at work that will benefit him most, work that will give him the training and experience

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necessary to gain him entry into that industry after his release; or (c) he may be merely placed at ordinary labor on the grounds.

Regarding the special class for defectives, it is composed of twenty, most often those recommended by the Boys' Court for treatment in the Psychopathic Department. These boys are mostly all feeble-minded and are vocationally untrained. The teacher in charge is a prison guard, new to the service, who has taken to the work remarkably well. A special course for the training of the feeble-minded would be of invaluable benefit to him and consequently to the class. At present its program consists of the following: Basketry (reed and raffia), Drawing (picture-frame making), Mat Weaving, Nature Study (care of plants), and with the coming of spring, Garden and Farm work, Woodwork, Bookbinding, Informal Gymnastics and Games and a slight amount of Arithmetic. As the treatment of these cases progresses, we may very probably take care of seventy or a hundred, developing some form of departmental system in which the inmate will devote all of his time to school work or partly to school work and the rest to some industry on the grounds.

Regarding those placed at some definite work in the institution, the information upon which the laboratory acts is the subject's industrial history, his preferences and ambitions checked up by the findings as a result of his performance in the various tests. In each test we have assumed, a priori, a certain amount of value for vocational prognostication. Only when a large enough number of tests are utilized can one begin to feel safe in making any kind of a judgment. It is a rather dangerous procedure especially where tests have not even been standardized and where all the conditions which might produce variations have neither been studied nor verified. Besides, there is sometimes so much conflicting evidence regarding the significance of any one particular test that only the wildest dare-deviltry can lead one to a practical application of it. The writer is fully conscious of the serious

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disapprobation his attempts, quixotic to some, may call forth. One's only excuse is, that in utter desperation at the lack of data regarding the practicability of tests for vocational prognostication, one uses his judgment backed by psychological training and insight, in drawing conclusions based on very little, if any, real evidence. To one working in this field a great deal of optimism is gained from Goddard's Industrial Classification. Here an attempt was made to correlate mental age as determined by the Binet Scale, with the kind of work that the individual is able to perform at that age level. It was found that the higher the mentality the more able was the person to perform activities of a complicated nature, and the smaller became the amount of supervision necessary. Thus after giving the Binet Test and determining the mental age, one can be fairly certain in estimating the complexity of work the subject can perform, and the amount of supervision which will be necessary. This leads one to feel hopeful that a large number of other tests, mental and physical, if utilized to determine their value for vocational prognosis, would yield as important results as did the Binet Test. At the House of Correction, however, we are unfortunately in a position where we cannot halt our procedure until the study of this problem is undertaken. We are consequently forced to assume, a priori, what such researches might yield regarding the value of some of the tests which we utilize and to apply these assumptions checking and correcting them by a careful follow-up system. At any rate we feel that we have nothing to lose and everything to gain. With regard to our particular method of examination and placement, a separate paper is in preparation.

Finally, the third group, that going to make up the general laboring class of the institution are, (a) inmates who after having been examined cannot be placed in any of the industries because they are already running to the limit of their capacity; (b) those whose sentences are soon to expire, for any efforts on our part for the amelioration of their condition

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would be very short-lived and consequently ineffective; (c) those sick or diseased (these, of course, are under the able treatment of the hospital corps); (d) those whose tendencies, ambitions, ability and capacities are on the "common laborer" level.

The industries which are in operation are the following: Tailoring, Shoeing, Basket Making, Rug and Mat Weaving, Sewing, Painting, Brick Making, Broom and Chair Making, Printing, Baking, Landscape Gardening, Raising of Farm and Dairy Produce, Carpentry, Kitchen Work, Barn Work, Cement Work, Leather and Laundry Work, Tree and Shrub Nursery Work, work in the Quarry, Incinerating Plant, work in the Boiler House and Engine Room, work in the Store, in the Barber Shop, and finally Clerical and Secretarial work. A veritable town in miniature! And to the Superintendent, Mr. John L. Whitman, is due a great deal of credit for his rather extraordinary and unusual ability in management, the high character of his foresight and the sanity of his progressive ideas.

As we proceed in the development of the department, we are instituting a careful follow-up system in order to check up our conclusions and prognostications. Detailed reports of the work and general activity of the separate members of the special class are made weekly, this data being supplemented by special occurrences or particular items of news regarding the prisoner's activity previous to and during his incarceration. So also a parallel follow-up system is maintained in all of the industries to which any are sent after the laboratory examination.

On the basis of these reports changes are made in the occupation of the inmate with the consequent modification or revision of the laboratory prognostication table.

One of the most pleasant phases of our work is the opportunity for co-operation which the Parting of the Ways Home places at our disposal. This is an institution maintained by private charity accommodating from 50 to 60 ex-

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inmates. It is located in the heart of the city and offers applicant's the comforts of a home, both in board and lodging, until they secure a position and find a place to live. They then pay back whatever they can to cover the expenses of their stay. A social service department is connected with the Home which aims to secure positions for worthy individuals. It is consequently in constant communication with employers and has thus far done admirable work in placing men on their feet and instilling them with confidence to fight their battles with a renewed and invigorated spirit. As the vocational and industrial work in the House of Correction develops, we hope to correlate much more closely the activities of the prisoner here with his ultimate placement in society. And the detailed follow-up system which we plan to maintain here will be continued as far as possible after the individual leaves these confines. Our success in this whole movement of the better, more sane treatment of the offender will lie almost wholly in placement and follow-up work. And, as far as we are successful in these two activities, in so far may we regard ourselves as successful in dealing with the problem as a whole.

What are our hopes for the future? We have confined ourselves here to only those things which almost all will recognize as possible of more or less immediate accomplishment. They may seem somewhat Utopian, but they are highly practical and are bound to come to fruition sooner or later. And this program indicates most clearly the progress we are aiming to achieve here.

A truly correctional institution must institute its correctional measures the moment a condemned person comes under its jurisdiction. Consequently, a prisoner upon entering, must first be thoroughly diagnosed. The examination ought to be medical, physical, bio-chemical, mental, psycho-physical, industrial and social. For the accurate performance of this work, an efficient corps of experts is necessary; specially trained people who can devote their time exclusively to the

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performing of each particular function. The information gathered at the various sources would then be correlated and unified by a central agent, and a full course of treatment outlined, mental, physical, industrial and social in its aspects. An efficient follow-up system would check up and correct the suggested treatment. This activity would be continued after the individual is released.

The work of the institution would then be divided into two phases (1) that with the normal, and (2) that with the feeble-minded. (The insane are omitted because society is much more active in making special provisions for this group than for the feeble-minded. Besides, the problem of the care of the feeble-minded is to some much more difficult of solution from a financial standpoint). The prison in reality ought to be a school. We are finding here that by far the larger per cent of those confined need *formation* not *reformation*. Here again, as others in other fields have admitted, the public school is observed to have failed in certain respects. And a large number of one's efforts in reform and correctional institutions are merely supplementations of the training which should have been received years ago. The curriculum of the prison school (for normals) ought to include theoretical and practical units. Of the first type could be enumerated such subjects as the 3 R's, history, geography, literature, art, physics, chemistry, biology, and under the second head, advanced carpentry, cabinet making, plumbing, typesetting, bookbinding, photography, applied chemistry and physics, modern languages, hygiene, civics and citizenship, gymnastics, gardening, band work and dramatics. The corps of teachers could easily be recruited from the prison population and the whole school organization could be placed under the direction of some five directors (civilians). The work of the schools and of the prison industries could easily be dovetailed. The average prison guard today is a passive individual. To achieve the best results, for the imprisoned and for society, he must become active in the formation and de-

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velopment of those capacities and abilities of the prisoner which will tend toward a better, higher citizenship.

Upon entrance, the same general procedure holds for the feeble-minded. With this group, however, the aim is to fit them for institution life or a place in a farm colony. For this type of defective the latter plan will no doubt prove the more valuable. It is a sad reflection upon our present methods of handling the feeble-minded if we must first attempt a solution of the problem of their care only after they have learnt the ins and outs of crime and delinquency. The defective-delinquent should have been recognized eight or ten years, *at least*, before he came here, and proper training and care should have begun then. Because of our careless delay, the problem has increased in difficulty easily a hundred-fold. Even now, with all our efforts toward institutional adjustment almost all the feeble-minded who pass through our department return to the community, by some erroneously conceived as "cured." All our efforts with this group go to waste unless some form of segregation or supervision follows their treatment here.

Our plans for the future regarding the feeble-minded are as follows: the mentally defective naturally fall into two groups; (a) those requiring some special training in order to adapt themselves to a particular kind of work; (b) those who have sufficient knowledge not to require any special efforts at training but can take their place in an institution industry immediately or after a short period of apprenticeship. The latter group not being sent to the class, take their place in some outside activity. The former, however, receive special training fitting them for institution life. (Those of the first group are generally younger chronologically and older mentally than those of the second). In the special class they are observed and studied. We may very probably develop a departmental system, supervised by a civilian head teacher, and assisted by inmate teachers, normal and feeble-minded. The curriculum would be what it now is, but with a few

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additions, a much larger number being provided for. Apprentices at the rate of two or three at a time might be sent into the Bakery, Barn, Cement Shop, Carpenter Shop, Laundry, Print Shop, Shoe and Tailor Shops, Farm, etc., there to be assisted and observed until adapted or in case of necessity transferred to another industry. To reduce this process of readaptation to a minimum, since it entails more or less waste, the same procedure in determining vocational fitness will be followed with the feeble-minded as with the normal. The training here for the sub-normal will be such as to prepare them primarily for life separate from that of normals, namely: that of an institution or a farm colony. To train the feeble-minded to be more self-supporting and having accomplished that, send them back to society with the probability of their multiplying to three or six times their present proportion is not solving, but seriously and dangerously aggravating the problem. Better nothing at all than such remedial measures! We cannot fall back on our present methods of sterilization, vasectomy or castration, for as Peters indicates (Vineland Research Publication, No. 2, 1914) this interference with the normal functioning of one of the organs of internal secretion greatly hampers the manufacture of those hormones, those chemical and physiological units, necessary for a normal, healthy metabolism. And, although he suggests Roentgenization, this process has not yet been fully established in practice to make its use general. It seems, however, to possess great value. Our only alternative then, is constant supervision through some form of segregation. To accomplish this we would first require the assistance of such a law as is now in force in England. The detection and segregation of the mentally defective would be greatly simplified, in fact, made quite automatic. And, although the cost might be a little large at the beginning, the ultimate cost to the community would undoubtedly be far below its present figure. This is quite evident when we consider the enormous cost in maintaining the feeble-minded

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in prisons, alms-houses, insane asylums, reformatories, aside from the extra legal machinery made necessary by placing the feeble-minded on the level of normals before the law. There has been only one case in the annals of United States courts where a moron was held irresponsible and consequently not guilty of a murder which he had committed. And even then, the court could make no disposition of the case, for the state made no provision for the *criminal* feeble-minded. The state institution for the feeble-minded refused him admission because of his criminality. The state insane asylum for criminals refused him admission because of his mental deficiency. So in utter desperation the presiding justice wrote across the commitment papers "*insane because of criminal imbecility!*" Only by this ludicrous distortion of the facts could he have been adequately provided for. And as much as we would wish to decry such efforts at warping the facts nevertheless, the judge should be commended for unusual sagacity in such an unprecedented situation.

The time is coming when the average citizen will be much more enlightened regarding the danger and menace of the feeble-minded than he is now. Such activity as that of the Vineland, N. J. Extension Department and of the local newspapers will tend to bring about an acceleration in the progress of our methods of social control, with the result that more thoro attempts will be made to cleanse society of an unnecessary evil. And since mental deficiency is in many cases a contributing cause in any number of serious social problems, it is clear that by removing as far as is possible the element of feeble-mindedness, these problems will be greatly simplified in their solution. Consequently all interested in the amelioration of social evils and the eradication of social sores, ought to aid in this movement toward the complete control by society of those mentally defective.

July 1915.

SAMUEL C. KOHS.

